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Notes on Pre-Historic Remains in the Aleutian Islands.

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Captain's Bay, Unalashka.—There are several village sites on this bay which, inhabited during the period subsequent to the Russian occupation of the territory, are now, and long have been deserted. The principal are the Pestriakoff, or Eider village, near Cape Cheerful; one on the south part of Amaknak Island, just south of Expedition Island, on Iliuliuk Harbor, and one in Nateekin Bay; beside the Kalekhta Bay village, more recently evacuated by its inhabitants. The only localities now inhabited are the village of Imagnee on Summer Bay, the village of Iliuliuk, and another of two or three houses, on Uknadok or Hog Island.

In excavating for the erection of a signal, at the northern end of Ulakhta Spit, Amaknak Island, the nature of the materials brought out showed that the locality had once been inhabited. Subsequent inquiries elicited the fact that the oldest inhabitants of Iliuliuk had never heard of any village being situated here, although villages which were deserted in the last century are well known by tradition to the Aleuts of the present day. Hence, it is a reasonable supposition that the village under consideration must at least have ante-dated the Russian invasion of 1760, and may have been older. Hence, the implements, etc., found in this deposit, are in all probability the same as those originally in use among the natives of this region before the introduction of manufactured articles of trade by civilized nations. On this account they are of singular interest. A careful examination of the locality afforded the following observations:

The Ulakhta Spit projects from Amaknak Island, trending nearly in a north and south direction. It is very narrow, being in some places only seven meters wide, and is composed entirely of shingle overlaid by a stratum of vegetable mould, which supports a luxuriant growth of the native grasses. Near the junction of the spit with the main island, it rises, and is continued in a series of low mounds for a quarter of a mile. Between these mounds and the mountainous portion of Amaknak Island, called Ulakhta Head, is a low and narrow strip of ground containing a small pond of brackish water. The highest of these mounds is quite near the north head of the spit, and it was here that my signal was located.

Upon this mound, about twenty feet above high water-mark, by careful scrutiny, I was able to detect at least three depressions of considerable size, which I judged to be the sites of houses of the ancient Aleutian fashion, that is to say, half underground, of sufficient size to accommodate a number of families, each

of which had a sort of compartment to itself. The hardy Aleuts had no fires in their houses except for cooking, and this was often done outside. They descended on a notched stick, through an aperture in the middle of the roof, which was also the only window. These depressions appeared to me to be the remains of some of these houses, a supposition afterwards confirmed by our excavations.

In digging the hole for the signal, we got two stone lamps for burning seal oil, about as deep as a saucer, and of an egg-oval shape, exactly similar to some I have seen in use among the present Eskimo of Bering Straits. They were of soft porphyritic rock and still retained traces of the action of fire. When used, they were filled with dried sphagnum soaked in seal oil, which gives out considerable light and heat, as well as smoke. We also obtained a bone arrow-head of the Eskimo pattern from this excavation. The next time that we visited the station, while busy in taking trigonometrical observations, I directed the boat's crew to dig in the northwest corner of what I supposed to be the remains of a house or yurt. This depression was on the crest of the ridge facing east and west, the longer sides about forty feet long and the ends about twenty feet.

The first thing noticed was a sort of wall of rough stones evidently obtained from the neighboring beach, with here and there a whale-rib, in a perpendicular position, which had probably assisted in supporting the roof. Further excavation for a couple of feet revealed a human skeleton in perfect preservation. The body had been doubled up so as to bring the knees up to the chin. It was lying on the right side in a horizontal plane facing the southeast. Two others were afterwards discovered in an exactly similar position. They were about three feet from the surface, but not so far from the inner wall of the house; one was the skeleton of a woman. A few rough flat stones were placed around and under them, but no articles of use or ornament were with the skeletons. It is a matter of record that the ancient Aleuts, when a person died in one of their houses, built up the body in the compartment which had belonged to the person when living, and continued to occupy the remainder of the yurt, as usual. The position in which these skeletons were found, indicates that such was the manner in which they had been interred. It is still a common practice among tribes of the Orarian stock, to tie up the body of a dead person in the manner just described. Further digging showed that a great part of the mound was composed of materials foreign to the locality. These principally consisted of bones of cetaceans, fur seal, (*Callorhinus ursinus*) sea lion, (*Eumetopias Stelleri*) and sea birds, principally ducks and gulls or petrels. There were also large accumulations of the shells of edible mollusks, among the most conspicuous of which were the common mussel (*Mytilus edulis*), *Saxidomus squalidus*, Desh., *Tapes staminea* Comr. and *Modiola modiolus* L. All the above are still living in these seas, most of which are still found in Captain's Bay, and form a portion of the food of the existing native population. The sea lion and walrus are no longer found in Unalashka, and the fur seal but rarely. That they must have been very abundant at one time is evident from the great accumulation of their bones in

this single mound, which was literally half composed of such debris, arranged in layers separated by vegetable mould. From these materials we picked out a number of articles of interest.

These were principally stone lamps like those previously described, of various sizes, differing in some extent in form and nicety of finish. Besides these there were also many large rough stones, either naturally or artificially hollowed out on one side, which had been subjected to the action of fire, and were probably the pavement or hearth upon which fire had been built for culinary purposes. Several rough pieces of cetacean bone were found brought to a sharp square edge at one end, and formerly in use for dressing skins. A few stone knives were found, all of the native pattern, *i. e.*, shaped like a chopping knife. These were of a dark slate-stone, which must have been brought from a locality nearer the mainland of America, as it is not found in Unalashka, or the islands west of it as far as known. Also a large part of a flat spoon of carved bone, with a grooved handle, several awls usually made from the wing bones of birds, bone arrow-heads of Eskimo pattern, fragments of bones variously grooved, cut or carved, and a little ball of bone half perforated. This puzzled me for a long time, until an old Aleut informed me that, in his boyhood, he had seen such things used as buttons, to be placed on the end of a bone lance or arrow, when practising at a mark, in order that the point might not become blunted or injured. None of these articles exhibited any particular skill in carving, or any ornamental patterns except of straight lines. A number of chipped flints which had evidently been used in striking fire, were also found.

Further explorations made during the ensuing winter and spring, revealed the sites of seven villages on Amaknak Island alone, of which but one or two are known even by tradition. Excavations in one or two of these places revealed similar implements to those already described; others might doubtless have turned up, but my means and time were too limited to permit very extensive excavations. I was able, however, to detect two other modes of burial among these prehistoric natives.

In certain places at the foot of overhanging cliffs, a wall had been built up until the rock above was reached, and outside a bank of earth or turf covered this wall. In the space inside, the debris had then been removed, and in this space, on a layer of small sticks of driftwood, the bodies had been laid, one above the other. In one case I found six skeletons, so placed and separated only by the layers of sticks and a piece of grass matting similar to that still manufactured by the natives of Unalashka. Here again I noted the remarkable absence of any utensils or articles of apparel or ornament. Only one bone arrow-head, with a piece of its shaft, and a fragment of a wooden mask, were found during the examination of some four or five of these caves, crammed with remains of skeletons. The bones were much decayed wherever water, percolating through the rocks, had been able to reach them, but where they were dry, they were well preserved. The bones agreed, in all essential respects, with Eskimo remains of similar character; the only anatomical peculiarity was the great stoutness of the long bones and a remarkable thickening of the inner face of the under jaw, which was so extensive, in a majority of cases, as to nearly close the space be-

tween the two halves of the jaw, the bone being over an inch in diameter in several cases.

A small cave exists, under an isolated rock, which stands on one of the raised beaches on the middle portion of the island. The entrance is very low, but inside one can stand erect, the cave being about twenty feet in diameter, and of an oval form, the highest point of the dome-shaped roof being about ten feet above the floor. A good deal of water had penetrated through the crevices of the rock, and the bones in this cave were very much decayed. I remarked remains of seven skeletons, arranged around the edges of the cave, that at the extremity of the cave furthest from the entrance being the skeleton of a woman, and close to it the remains of an infant. The floor consisted of about six inches of black mould, covering the usual shingle of the beaches. A number of angular fragments of rock had fallen from above. No remains of animals were found here, and if there had been any wooden articles they had all rotted away.

Near one of the skeletons was found, heaped together, a number of stone knives, a bone awl, and two fragments, one of pumice and the other of fine sandstone, with their edges and surfaces smoothed and squared evidently for the purpose of dressing down the asperities of skins to be used for clothing. The most interesting collection was found near the skeleton of the woman, and consisted of two bone labrets* shaped like those now in use among the Thlinkets and Botocudos. These are doubtless very ancient, as all traces of the usage have long since passed away. There were besides, a lot of needles made of the wing bones of birds, a needle case made of the humerus of some large bird, closed at each end by a wooden stopper, bone awls, stone knives, a whetstone of fine grained sand rock, and a little case of birch bark containing plumbago. Neither the birch, the sandstone, nor the black slate, of which the knives were made, nor the plumbago, exist on the island of Unalashka.

As proved by other researches on the islands of Kadiak and Unga, the early Aleuts were accustomed to preserve the remains of their more eminent dead by removing the viscera, stuffing the body with dry grass and drying it. This was placed in some dry cave, dressed as in life, ornamented with gay apparel, and covered with wooden carvings, the most remarkable of which were masks of large size, painted of different colors and ornamented with feathers, tufts of hair and bristles from the deer. A very great variety of other carvings were also placed in these caves,† and sometimes the bodies, placed in natural attitudes, were covered entirely with carved wooden armor, or placed in a miniature canoe or bidarka, armed as if hunting, or holding a paddle. Women were represented as if sewing, dressing skins or nursing their infants; old men as if beating their drums, as they do during the winter-dances in Eskimo villages to this day.

But few of these remains exist in a well preserved condition, yet the extent of the practice may be understood from the fact that over thirty different masks, all more or less mutilated, were found in one cave at Unga. Any notes in regard to them possess a certain interest, and may be worthy of preserva-

* Pl. II, figs. 1-2.

† Pl. II, figs. 3-5.

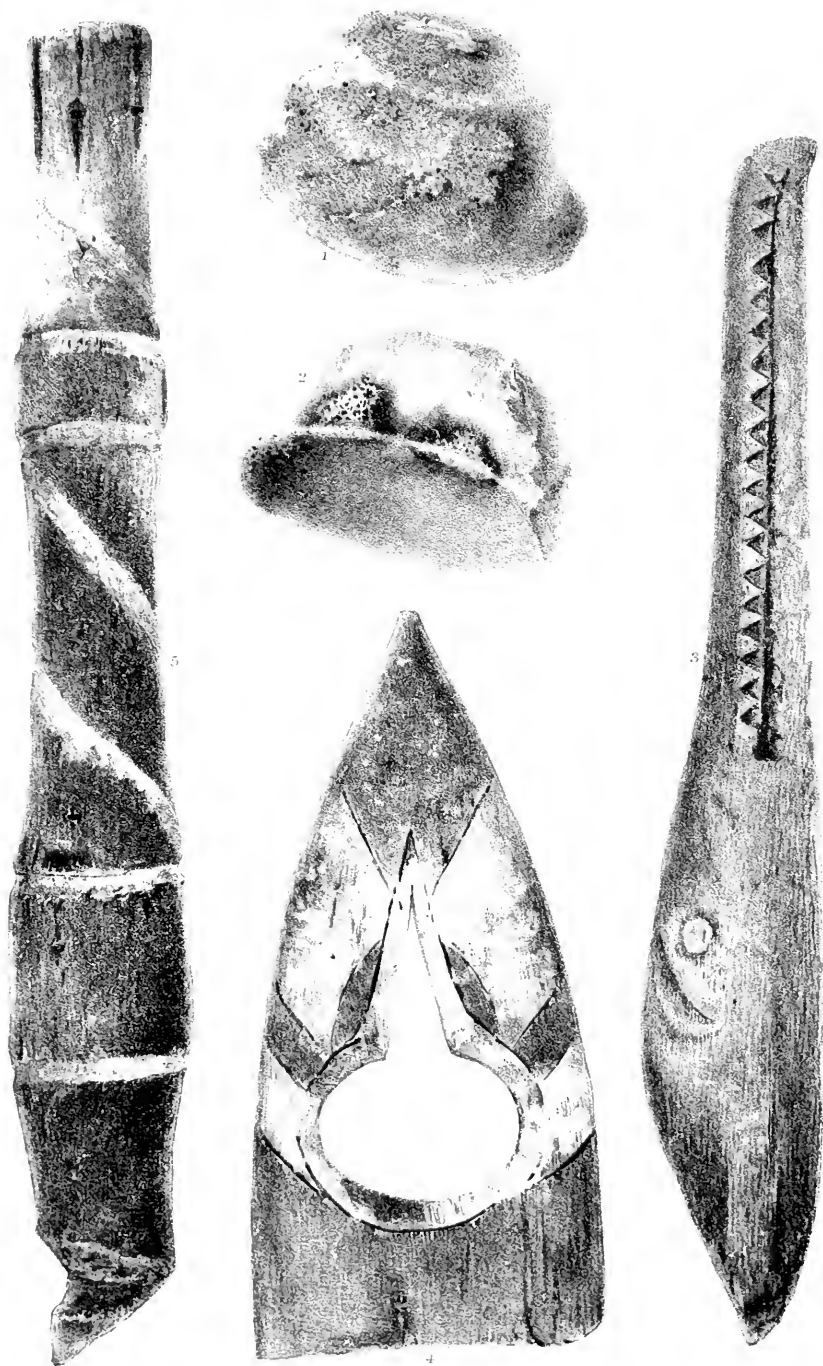


FIG. 1-2 BONE LABRETT FROM THE AMAKNAK CAVE.
FIG. 3-5 WOODEN CARVINGS FROM THE CAVE AT DELAROFF HARBOR.

tion, as before many years have gone by, even the traces of these by-gone customs will have entirely disappeared.

Shelikoff reported on the first census in 1795 a population of ten thousand Aleuts, including thirty-six hundred natives of Kadiak. In 1867 the total Aleutian population in the islands amounted to about 1930, according to the report of Prof. Geo. Davidson, U. S. Coast Survey. The census for 1871, as reported to me by the priest of Unalashka, was 2574 in all; of the inhabitants of the islands only, there were in 1870, 1901, with 97 births and 104 deaths; in 1871, 1913 souls, with 44 births and 57 deaths; the increase of 12 being due to immigration from Sitka and the mainland. The death rate is slightly the largest and a gradual decrease in population is resulting, pointing toward the final extinction of the race.

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